

ROBBINS AND FOX LIBRARIES

The library's mission is to be a vital resource for Arlington, creating opportunities for lifelong learning, meaningful connection, and discovery for all. The Robbins Library and Fox Branch Library strive to offer outstanding collections and services to meet the evolving interests and needs of the community. To accomplish its mission, the library relies on a variety of resources including volunteer hours, library trust funds, grants from the Arlington Libraries Foundation and the Friends of the Robbins Library, proceeds from the Fox and Robbin Shop, and state aid.

Department Overview

Under the administration of the director and assistant director, the library's six service departments and the Fox Branch Library work together to achieve the library's mission.

The Circulation Department is responsible for customer service and functions related to checking out and returning thousands of items at the Robbins Library circulation desk and at the Fox Branch, issuing library cards, and maintaining order on the shelves with assistance from library pages and volunteers. The Department also processes the daily Massachusetts Library System delivery of returned items and items on hold from other Minuteman Library Network libraries.

The Children's Services and Teen Services Departments are responsible for collection development and services for children, teens and families, and outreach to schools. The Children's Services Department oversees the distinctive Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund, which sponsors a program coordinator and special programs and services for children and teens on an annual basis.

The Adult Services Department provides reference services and public technology support on site at the main reference desk and by phone, email, and chat. The Department includes the Local History librarian and the Local History Room collection and resources, plus oversees book clubs and programs for adults and the

library's array of online databases.

The Technical Services Department receives vendor shipments of new items and prepares them for library collections. In 2021 the department processed over 18,000 new items, maintained catalog records, and managed invoices and accounts in coordination with the library Office Manager.

All of the library's public-facing and staff-facing technology equipment, systems, and peripherals are managed by the Information Technology (IT) Department. The department ensures that Robbins and Fox equipment meet the Minuteman Library Network's management system requirements and support all library cataloging, purchasing, collection management and circulation functions.

The Fox Branch Library manager plans collections and services at the branch and works with all departments to ensure smooth and consistent delivery of library services.

Library Board of Trustees

Under trustee bylaws and consistent with Section 22 of the Arlington Town Manager Act, the seven-member Board of Trustees establishes general operating and administrative policies, advocates for excellent library services, plans and anticipates the future needs of the library, and administers all restricted and unrestricted contributions to the library and all restricted and unrestricted Library Trust Funds.

Accomplishments in 2021

Restored library services and hours, moving from a short-term appointment reservation system at Robbins (April – mid-June) to reopening Robbins and Fox with fully restored hours and in-person programs in June 2021.

Completed a new Strategic Plan to guide library services and activities from 2022 to 2026. Having a plan filed with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) also makes the library eligible for grants.

| Library Statistics | FY2018 Actual | FY2019 Actual | FY2020 Actual | FY2021 Actual |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Materials Circulated | 741,374 | 749,636 | 669,692 | 707,033 |
| Physical materials | 663,644 | 643,004 | 520,080 | 516,134 |
| Digital materials (ebooks/audio/video) | 77,730 | 106,632 | 149,612 | 190,899 |
| Children's and Teen program attendance | 26,478 | 25,254 | *5,756 | *2,029 |
| Adult program attendance | 2,756 | 2,886 | *676 | *2,700 |
| * Includes virtual program attendance. | | | | |

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Created a digital repository, Elevating Arlington's Voices of Color, in support of Town-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts. In partnership with the DEI Director and the Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture, the library continues seeking contributions for this unique and dynamic collection.

Expanded the Arlington Reads Together selection committee to include a DEI Division representative, two Arlington High School students, and additional school librarians.

Brought renowned author Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum to Arlington via Zoom in March 2021 through a grant partnership between the Arlington Libraries Foundation and the Arlington Education Foundation. Over 200 attended Dr. Tatum's keynote Arlington Reads Together program on her seminal work, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*



Screenshot of Dr. Tatum and Dr. MacNeal. Caption: Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Roderick MacNeal, Jr.

The updated Sora app launched with K-12 students, a schools-specific Overdrive digital content platform. Through Sora students can link their school accounts to the Minuteman Library Network and search the library's collection of thousands of titles in addition to the schools' content. Thanks to promotion and outreach efforts by school librarians, Arlington's Sora collection is the most heavily used in the region.

Within the Minuteman Library Network, Arlington had the 4th highest use of digital content in FY21 after Cambridge, Newton, and Brookline.

Added a "readalongs" collection in the Children's Room. Readalongs are picture books enhanced with a simple audio MP3 player that allows children to listen and follow along.

Applied for and received 20 circulating hotspots through a federal grant funded program offered by the Mass Board of Library Commissioners.

Continued the popular Grab Bags materials reservation system. Library users can request materials for themselves or their children by filling out a simple online form, and librarians put together curated materials for them.

Planned much-needed improvements to the library's "third branch," robbinslibrary.org, awarding a

redesign contract to a highly qualified Arlington-based firm. The new site launches in 2022.

Continued being an active partner in the Housing Corporation of Arlington's Human Services Network, a coalition of Town departments and non-profit social services organizations working to identify and stabilize vulnerable community members by connecting families and individuals to resources that promote healthy living.

Supported public art projects in and around the Robbins Library and Fox Branch Library, in partnership with the Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture.

Coordinated with ACMi to make library-produced videos of virtual programs available to wider audiences.

Partnered with Arlington EATS to provide age-appropriate giveaway books to families receiving meals in July and August.

Assisted in the creation of a self-guided tour of Arlington's Cultural District in collaboration with the Arlington Cultural District and the Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture.



A robin over Robbins. Credit: Jonathan Spiller

Future Goals

The following objectives are defined in the library's new Strategic Plan. The complete plan can be found on the library website, robbinslibrary.org.

Reevaluate and explore the expansion of library hours with specific attention to weekends, Thursday mornings, and the Fox Library.

Expand co-creation of programs and events, using community expertise and partner resources more fully.

Diversify and expand program offerings for teens, tweens, and adults, including exploring options for inter-generational events.

Continue to reevaluate and balance physical and digital/downloadable collections, in keeping with sustained and projected usage trends.

Develop and implement a marketing plan, with a focus on increasing use and awareness of underserved audiences and non-users.

Partner with the Arlington Public Schools to issue a library card to each student and expand the use of library services by children.

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Develop an action plan for incremental and long-term physical upgrades at both libraries to better serve and support people of all abilities and build towards the “Reimagining Our Libraries” vision, as resources allow.

Additional Objectives

Proceed with plans to divest the library of the Winfield Robbins Art Prints collection.

Continue as a partner within the Human Services Network, a coalition of Town departments and non-profit social services organizations working to identify and stabilize vulnerable community members by connecting families and individuals to resources that promote healthy living.



Acknowledgements

The Library Board of Trustees and library administration recognize that special grants, gifts and bequests do not take the place of public support, but help to further enhance library facilities, services and collections. These library support organizations and their volunteer boards, advisors and members are gratefully acknowledged:

Arlington Libraries Foundation

The Arlington Libraries Foundation fulfilled the library’s fiscal year 2022 grant request, funding materials and various initiatives including the Arlington Reads Together program. Established in 2013, the Arlington Libraries Foundation conducts fundraising appeals and campaigns, and secures and stewards the gifts, grants and endowments that provide essential

funds toward the library’s current and long-term goals.



Friends of the Library

In 2021 the Friends of the Robbins Library granted funds for signature initiatives such as the library’s 3rd floor balcony beehives, the popular museum pass program, and the Library of Things. The Friends of the Robbins Library is a membership-driven non-profit that also runs ongoing book sales for the benefit of the library.



The Fox & Robbin Shop

The Fox & Robbin Shop is a children’s resale shop within the Fox Library. The shop is operated by a non-profit with paid and volunteer staff whose primary mission is to support services at the Fox Library with proceeds from the shop.



Volunteers

During the pandemic the library suspended its general volunteer program but continued offering Homebound Delivery service, supported by volunteer couriers. Library administration and the Board of Trustees are grateful to the Homebound Delivery volunteers who helped keep some of our most vulnerable residents supplied with library materials to enjoy.